

EROS

Poems

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In the Green House

The lemon on the lemon tree hangs there
Suspended in the arbor where the wind
Is tempered to a gentle touch of air,
And the sun is warm upon its yellow rind.
And hanging in the glare of midday sun
That penetrates the dark and shadowed leaves,
The lemon bears a hot darkness within
Distilled from all the light that it receives,
The slowest distillation of noon light,
For time is slowest when its gains are made,
And heavy though it is, the fruit is swayed
Upon a rising wave of warmth and light.
This moment: fragrant, still, the briefest sense
Of some fulfillment, this day, this silence.

A White Rose Given to Me

Your white rose now more lovely than it was
With its green stem that once drank up the rain
Now drinks the rain that's water in my glass
Where it and my water measured out remain
As coupled things, both lending each a part
To a civilized and innocent repose
In which not nature nor too much of art
Has marred a natural grace where it arose,
But left it sweet and telling of a love
That may be not the blossoming result
Of stem and rain and dark earth that it's part of,
But blossoming no less is clearly felt
As such more truly ours, nor any less
For being thus in our power to express.

White Rose Petals

In the deep articulations of the rose,
The flower, the emblem it is said, of love,
Petals cover petals which then enclose
A portion of that darkness they're part of.
Here where it seems the beautiful abounds
Petals chasing petals are impelled
Around themselves until the flower surrounds
That center where a sheer absence is held.
For at the flower's heart the darkness is
As nearly pure as white throughout the rest,
Apparent opposites made one in this
Complicity where both are manifest
As each reflects the other there, displayed
With the flower that they both have made.

Woman in the Bath (after Bonnard)

You lie in the half-lit bath, the water's light
Reflecting tiles on the walls: the purple tinge
The bath beads have imparted cannot quite
Disguise the rose warmth of your pale skin
Which has its more than luminous warm light.
The tiles are dark. The soft gold light within
The floating form they harbor half-asleep,
Nearly awakened by the creaking hinge
That softly tells of my departing glance,
Cannot proceed from any other source,
Nor can it make appeal to just one sense
But must involve all beauty, all sadness
For beauty in its casual radiance
Within the dim confinement it must keep.

Spring Warmth

The heavy ice upon the branch is thawed
And the ground is wet for melting has begun
With run-off water that leaves steaming mud
And pools of ice water in the sun --
The sun that warms and stirs and now makes run
The sticky sap within the heart of wood,
Resinous blood that flushes through the grain
Of branches that glisten in the morning light
With melting ice that drips from them like rain.
How all so unaccountably is right
As spring warmth runs like sap through every part,
A sap that rises from the earth and root
Through every branch until the early shoot
Stirs green inside the winter of the heart.

A Walk into the Summer Night

Perfume --

The warm night breeze has brought me this,
The scent of earth and of the humid rich black soil
Now opened up and bringing forth the squash, tomatoes,
And the pepper plants, the fragrant leaves of basil
And the onions too, the weeds that gather
Near the edges of the garden,
The essence of the summer's living body in this scent.

And then the green pea vines,
The vines of pole beans climbing in the sun
That with their flowers and their broad green leaves
Are searching out the light and heat of day,
The tall sunflower open to the light
To be the emblem of the summer afternoon,
Attentive to the sun and surely following
Its arc from hour to hour
In living joy beneath its light and heat.

And yet in the suggestion of this scent
There is a heaviness too much of earth.

And as you walk into the summer night
You breathe its rich and complex scent
And take it deep within.

It must be part of you,
The inmost knowledge that you wrest

From your ecstatic contact with the world --
The warm night breeze that blows across your face,
The moon that -- copper, orange, and full -- shines down,
The midnight air.
All takes you in, accepts you -- you are here,
And so must take your place within this night.

Amor

Night of the flowering jasmine
And a thousand fireflies,
Each firefly a thought
The night will think just once

Inconsolable therefore
The ceaseless waters of the spring
In which the bright moon shines
Like a shimmering black oil

The garden and the walk
Are empty now, and only we
Are heard by night's wide open ear,
The night is still to listen as we speak

Everything we do is seen
By night's wide eye, a single pupil
Velvet and hypnotic black
And wide as the entire sky

All this just fills our
Solitude more deeply.
Night's eye is our own sight
Made wider, deeper by desire,

And night's ear our avidity
To hear just our two selves.
They're my desire to hear, to see
Just you and only you,

And your desire likewise
To be with only me,
Even a thousand fireflies
Somehow are yours and mine.

The grass is full of dampness,
And the garden sleeps tonight
Untouched by breeze. I listen
For your speech and for your silence.

Speak them now.

Wet Summer Night

The breeze across our dampened porch
Brings the scent of basil and of wet
Black soil across your silhouette;
It touches, though we do not touch.

One cannot get away -- perfume
Of spearmint and the night-dewed grass
Will enter deeply and possess
The cool air of a dark bedroom.

Is this night rain -- the leaf's wet tip
Bent down to touch the leaf below?
Or is it dew that gathering slow
Distilled its one depending drop?

It doesn't matter. Either way
There's all this damp mist in the air.
Let's let it soak us and not care
How wet we get before the day.

To Emily Dickinson

Letters, steeples, bees, eternity --
Candles that you burned, and from the sting
Of dripping flame upon the skin we see
Such shapes that you made brilliant in
destroying.

The flame that pulses in the heart with fire's
Simplicity, the sheerest tongue within
That flickers in the wind of all desires,
You held within your subtle discipline.

Now we in what is left us of such art
Find that which is and yet is not a presence --
Your voice within, as at the diamond's heart
What is not fire burns in silence.

The Stranger

We're naked in the summer night, the air
In your dark bedroom warm, and yet
The midnight breeze just stirs and freshens it,
The fragrant air we both breathe, now and here:
Now, when you whisper wordlessly in my ear,
Here, where your sweat is mingled with my sweat,
Your legs around me clasping me so tight,
Your mouth pressed into mine, our breath together,
Your untormented and yet crying voice
Now carried through the deep night -- far, so far --
Beyond all thought of future or of past,
Of pleasure or of pain, of chance or choice,
Of pondered death or sleep or of desire
For either, of the world possessed or lost.

Heaven and Earth

The sky is beautiful tonight, deep blue
Of hyacinth and cobalt, and the stars
Are white along the eastern hills. Whispers
Just audible of evening's breeze that now
Grows quiet at the very end of day,
Though still it touches leaf and stem and stirs
The leafy vines and delicate white flowers.
Moving between us, all about us too,
Desire awakening inside of us,
Though not a good yet bringing us all good,
Opens forgotten places in the night
Where laughter flowers from the shaken leaves,
Where life, the world, and passion are restored
To what they were and earthly love is sweet.

Stranger from the dark wood...

Stranger from the dark wood, how your dark
Tough nipples were so strange between my teeth,
And how I felt you whisperingly breathe
Into my ear 'now say you want to fuck
Me, that you want me that you want to suck
My nipples,' as you lay there underneath
Me, as we strove and struggled and my breath,
Like yours, came faster as you sucked my cock.
I took your nipples in my mouth again.
A fluid – clear, a bit like egg white – came
From them, from you, to me. I was surprised,
And you somewhat amused by that. And then
You held my head in both your arms, eyes closed,
And I, with my eyes closed, shared in your dream.

The night will come...

The night will come and it will have your voice,
Your smoker's voice, felt in your absence
Like a severed limb. I feel your presence
Ache in the unsatisfied tormented place
Where somehow you are still inside of me.
The two of us were one; I drank you in --
Your essence all around me and within,
My aching tongue searching inside of you.
So I possess you now and always will.
Yet what could be more empty, more painful
Than this consuming memory of love --
Possessing nothing, never to be free
Of what I need most but can never have,
Although I did, and it's still part of me.

Ritual Speech I

Once again, the vague parting
In your dark hair --

Your deep perfume,
And a silken lubricant

On the tip of my tongue,
Not a half-remembered word

But you, at the tip
Of my tongue, you speak

The word I can't recall,
In every cry, in breath itself

And yet why recall it? --
If this is the ritual

Of merely trying to remember,
Of again forgetting ?

Again and again,
The word is torn from us both --

From my searching tongue,
From your ecstatic throat

Ritual Speech II

This part of me is like a tongue,
Moving, speaking inside you

Your opening
Is a mouth

Which holds this tongue

Your mouth open, avid, voluble
My tongue ardent, pointed and searching --

What speech do we bring forth?
We who can only do so together

Her Voice

I always loved that voice the most
Which came from somewhere deep inside
Of you. Remember once embracing as
We stood without our clothes beside your bed?

I stood behind you with one hand
That touched your small soft breast and one
The roundure of your stomach, and your skin
As soft as dusty moth wings, your brown hair

Which caught the bedside lamp's dim shine --
Your bedroom amber lit, then not.
And then your breathing, and your voice filled up
The darkness as a fragrance fills a room --

Everywhere, no one place, always
Here, here, here, in front of me,
Around me, all around me, as I pressed
My forehead and my lips into your hair,

And you your head against my face,
So that your up-turned face spoke toward
The dark above us as your voice cried out.
It cried and cried. I keep on hearing it.

Eros

I enter you, your legs spread wide,
My tongue within your mouth, my cock
Touching you, searching you deep inside.
You cry and dig your nails in my back.

What do you whisper breathing in my ear?
That you want me inside you, but not there.
Poised like a brimming glass I wait,
Then every drop flows down your throat.

"The moon is full tonight -- the trees..."

The moon is full tonight -- the trees
Not leaved yet in the early spring
Provide a wicker basketing
Or brambly partial canopies.

The clouds pour by in tatters, flakes,
Or broader edge-lit islands.
Sometimes the moon is cauled with gauzy streaks,
And sometimes there it stands --

Amid the flowing wind, calcium-white.
I walk and watch it -- silver shoes
Amid the watery stars and deep night-blues,
Changing itself, part of the moving night.

Sources

Silent, the hottest hours pass
In the field, and I've lost my way.
Breathing the scent of the tall never-mown grass,
The heat of the summer's day,

Listening -- hear the life of noon,
The absence of breeze.
Stopping here to sit
I like am a stone tossed in a pool,
Silence widening in ripples.

The throb of time, the heat ,
These summer things, departing --

Now the study of silence.

Place your hand against the ground.
Place your ear against the ground.

For Claudia, with Flowers

Dear Claudia

I've gathered the Queen Anne's Lace

if you
look closely
find one magenta spot

at each center just
a tiny dot
in this one, in that one
(I can't help wonder what it could be for)

But each one has a drop of purple dye
as though dabbed in there
just to catch your eye

What intricate white patterns they create

A lacy mathematics and so delicate

Now take them though so common they like you
are yet so beautiful

Gacela

A pine scent pine fragrance in our room
 limitless sweetness at the heart of night
 everywhere nowhere
 always long ago
 here while you sleep
 now

multiplying essences of time
 this moment, this hour
 suggestion of depths
 of spaces, times
 and sudden opening

these touch the deeply known

essences Being in itself
 yours mine
 suddenly no thought no act is needed
 only
 your presence

somehow here
proclaiming

two solitudes resolved to light
made one now

now still
passions of your sleep

Morning Light

Morning tide of light across the wall

winter's clear frozen day

me from my sleep

and to myself

and then

you to me out of your sleep as well

awakening is

a new power, powers

and beauty here to be known

seen

Clear light

and your form revealed

Morning

here and now

a kind of mystery disclosed

and to be known felt as much as seen

as light

Darkness Pine Trees

This darkness of pine trees
 and the glitter of sunlight on the water

 twilight here, now

In you a river path and I follow it
 wherever you would

And in the darkness
 you are everywhere
your silences
 your kisses touch desire
must gather
 there

 enigma of your voice

At evening I have seen the fields

 the rippling corn
 and the shadows of wind

Half an Hour

We never slept together; probably
We never will. We talked
In the amber dimness of the bar a while, sitting
In a booth; the two of us were drinking,
You were smoking too as usual,
And gradually, ever so slowly
You moved a little closer,
Or maybe it was I
Who moved,
Just to be a little bit nearer to you.
It really is a pity
That we never did,
And you know I won't deny
That it's you I've always loved.
But people who are like us, artists,
Sometimes we,
By going far -- very far, so far --
Into the fury and confusion
Of our creativity
Create a kind of pleasure, or in fact a joy,
That borders on the physical.
So, being with you yesterday,
Albeit with the help of alcohol
And its mysterious possession,
I had but half an hour -- yes, just thirty minutes --
That were ecstatic, wonderful,
Irrational, and also beautifully erotic,
And I think you knew
And stayed a little longer with me there
Because of it. I was so glad of that

And grateful too, since then
With all my ardor and imagined love,

Under the spell of darkness, music, smoke, and
alcohol,

I had to see your face across from mine,

I had to see your lips,

I had to have you near.

In Memory of S__

The quiet of the garden: evening's light
Grows deeper as the sun burns in the trees,
And gradually across the lawn one sees
The shadows lengthen with the summer night.
The moths have taken wing and one by one
The stars make their appearance in the sky,
The night breeze almost imperceptibly
Has brought the scent of earth to where I lie,
The scent of summer night where I, alone,
Have come to rest and just think quietly.
The night is still, the breeze blows now and then,
The roses, their leaves blown by the soft breeze, stir,
Delicate roses of the long summer,
These flowers I see, have seen, and will again.

Early Morning, Dry Summer

Rushing and sibilant sounds
Like fine sand being poured
Sound in the midst of sleep.

Paper and dust blown through the street,
Tumbling sheets of newspaper
And a fine grey-white dust.

A prickling dawn wind
Pours through the agitated trees,
Black trees against the amber dawn.

Their shadows reach out steeply
On the lawn where the brown grass
Is henna in the early light.

The white sheet turns to grey.
Then glowing slats are dust-grey
And pale blue with white incisions.

Thin wires of mercurochrome light
Array the gradus of the blinds.
The gills of light open up still more.

The sun comes through to us
And the room grows into day.
She sleeps, but not entirely,

Her eyelids tremulous at light
That steals past their shade
To softly search and lightly touch,

Her breath as light as moths.
Yet still she lies so heavily
Beside me here, though in

Just-found substantiality
Grows slowly light, like everything,
Grows free of dreams, of any dream.

The world grows free of night
Around us now, both new and old.
We know it just-perceptibly renewed,

The smallest change, yet everything,
The opening of day's blue eye,
And I rise now glad to rise.

Curriculum Vitae

So many men have been where I am now,
Where I have been. You told me this yourself.
The autumn town. The day is wet and cold.
The maple leaf is crimson. The oak leaves fall.

Cold rain is lashing through the black branches.
We're lying in your bed. You touch my face.
And it's a type of knowledge, isn't it, touch?
According to Aristotle, the most sure.

What do you learn, then, when you touch my face?
My handsome face, you say. Words sound so strange.
What do our mouths, our voices know to say?
Tell me if you can think of anything.

What do you know, my body next to yours?
And what do I? The autumn rain runs down
The window's glass in streams and streaming drops.
Seasons continue. What else can they do?

So many women and so many men.
The afternoon grows darker. Shadows fill
The room. Your clothes in the open closet
Are dim shapes. Ajar, the white door glimmers.

The air is cooler and it feels like night.
A quiet is settling. Now do you feel it?
When everything's been offered and been had,
What have we learned? What will we ever learn?

Attainment

Tonight I write no poems, let the breeze
That fluctuates the odors of the garden be enough.
The dark is almost here,
The shadows gradually become the night
And deeper silence settles in.

The arbor where I sit is dark and still.
The scent of earth pervades it like a thought.
The grapes are clustered thickly on the roof
And roses twine along the latticed wall,
Rich yellow roses in the last of light.

I take and pluck one petal from a rose.

Now feel its subtle texture, slight and soft,
Between your fingers there -- it stills all thought.
The night is dark, the place is darker still
Where you and I sit quietly together -- now, here.

Close your eyes. Don't think of what is past
Or think of any future that might come.
This silence, this one moment -- this is all,
The one fulfillment that you're sure to know.

The night is fragrant, heavy with the scent
Of honeysuckle, roses and the scent of earth.
And in the arbor darkness is complete.

A stillness all around is stillness in the heart,
Don't ask for what the evening cannot give.
Think all attainment trivial to the heart.
This is attainment, here within this dark.

Afterward

The room three-quarters dark
just one dim amber light
upon the bedside stand

I lie awake
thinking through questions of the night
twilit passages of thought and doubt
sadness
for the moment
meditatively distracted

a quiet and temporary peace now

Or just
wondering

I wonder at your sleeping form
spirit and body
now at one in this original stillness
separateness always available

And at our ritual how old is it?
of separateness ignored
on just pretense

It will be long
before the dawn light
edges the curtains
with a dim blue gray
before the sun's
bright light rays in

through
cigarette burn openings

Lie peacefully in sleep
I will lie here too

waiting and thinking the whole time

A Light

This paper lantern is hung
In the dimming arbor here.

It's like an enormous poppy
Constructed of paper and wire.

Its pistil-like candle burns
And gives a soft orange light.

Its paper skin is dry and stiff
Yet very warm to the touch.

It hangs here. In the dark
It seems to float weightlessly.

The orange light it gives is
Unlike a jack o' lantern's,

Although they share one color.
For this is summer. It's still summer.

From Lorca

The archers, the dark archers
Came nearer to Seville.

The open Guadalquivir.

They came with broad grey hats
And with their long slow capes.

Ah, Guadalquivir.

They came from distant regions,
Those of pain and sorrow.

The open Guadalquivir.

They enter the dark labyrinth
Of love, crystal and stone.

Gacela

No one has tasted, or could ever guess
Your fragrance, black cymbidium perfume.
No one could know the torment of your whisper,
The dark rose petal of your fluent tongue,

Your crying tongue, which was a thorn as well
To enter me, yet entered as a rose,
Which blossoming through every part broke out
A thorn again to seek only your hand,

Your body, the elusive garden where
A thousand petals bury our night's sleep
Beneath your closed eyelids, behind your lips,
Between the parting branches of your thighs.

How easily you took my life away.
I died of hunger and I died of thirst.
No one has tasted or could ever guess
What you have given me to drink: perfume,

What you have given me to eat: roses.
No one could know this, or will ever know,
This garden of my death and resurrection.
And since I know, I too must be no one.

In the Dark

This candle
In our darkened room
White point the darkness
Moves around

The lighted candle
Burning near a hand's
Shadow on the ceiling
The hand that reaches out

Illuminated now
A pale petal-orange
Between the blind's of fingers
Before the light is gone

The dark is settling now
With its candle smoke and silence

A Voice

Only those
Who know desire
Know who I am
Know what I am

Only they
Can take the step
To where I am
In the mirror realm

To what I am my
Breath of shadows
And my eyes of
Shadows shadow eyes

Only those
Who know desire
Know my dusty touch
Like moth wings

Know my mouth
Like gold eyes gold eyes
On the green moth's wings
Like the black moth's eyes themselves

Like the open
Gashes mouths of tree knots
Speaking silent
In the night

Like the blank spots
In a mirror
After the mirror
Has been shattered

Like the jagged bits
The broken glass
The eyes the faces there
In fragments in the empty frame

When I rise from the dead...

When I rise from the dead
When you rise from the dead
No stone will be there
At the door of the tomb

There will be nothing
And there will be no one,
When I rise from the dead
When you rise from the dead

Burning, the shadow
Of our paper flesh
And burning the substance we are
Our shadows the ash

And the dark we become
It grows longer at evening
The sun leaks its blood
It streams around the ash of my life

When I rise from the dead
When you rise from the dead
No more ashes to touch
When the dead walk the earth once again

The Queen of Heaven

The great inverted crotch of the oak tree
Is a huge woman upside down.
Her legs spread wide
Now draw in all the powers
Of the rivers of the air, the rain
And the punishments of rainy wind.

Her head is underneath the earth,
And from the dark inverted crown
The ganglia and branches
Of her hair reach down, reach down
Dark wrappings, arterial
And complicated threads,
Her tingling awakened nerves
Are opening and stirring,
Ringing and flushed with wet.

A powerful rain-gust rattles the glass pane,
It blurs it with a splash,
It shakes and buffets it.
Again and again the whole tree flows
And shudders through the waves of grey rain-mist.
Its limbs and all its branches
Surge and sway, bend and then snap back --
Again and again their heavy toss,
The sudden shiver as a branch breaks off.

Yet down inside the earth, deep down,
She opens her mouth wide in pleasure.

Scent of roses, yellow roses...

Scent of roses, yellow roses,
Present in the mirrored room.
In the mirror, dresser, table,
Stand inside their pool of moonlight.

Silence, and the moonlight's rain
Pours in through the open window --
Yellow moonlight, ivory yellow,
Unearthly silent night and
Yellow moonlight full of roses,
Their fallen petals and their scent
In the mirrored room's reflection

Here, in the unearthly night.

The Suicide

And with all speech
Now dead
I lie here at the edge of sleep
Beneath the barely known and undepicted
Elusive
Darkness of the night --
No end and no beginning,
The living and the dead of all the ages
And the numberless dead worlds
Crowding the dense
But thinly known,
The infinitely ramifying now so
Vacantly populated
Night.

How many others' thoughts
Have entered here?
Like tiny sand grains
Down a well.
How many where the barren wind
Blows out
The flickering and low-burnt candle light?
And now two staring eyes,
Two groping hands,
The just apparent breath,
The liminal, the nominally
Real.

Now come all star-filled spaces
At the edges of the dark.

I say farewell to them.
I turn to feel the earth,
Its faintest grass with my two feet, the scent of rain,
The touch of tangled roots,
The crumble of black dirt, the memory
Of worlds once known
And lived.

I also say farewell to these.

The sin of non-awakening.
Three flowers
And the dead root of my hand
Now given to the wind,
Now thrown to the stream of night.
A blind face in the dark
Consenting to be blind.
Blindness. Guilt.
Blindness.

I could not love my life.

Winter Morning, Traces

Do not rush. Do not grasp. Open.

Winter morning. The snow, in grey light, is lavender on the roofs of the houses nearby. My bathroom window is open. A fir tree stands in the yard next door with its chevrons of snow. Suddenly a crow flaps heavily in the topmost boughs, shaking down blue dustings of snow. How soon the morning has started.

It is just as I thought when I was young: at dawn the roofs of the houses are nothing if not a map of desire.

I stand at the bathroom mirror. The hot water rushes from the tap with the force of an arrow from its bow. The steam rises.

The mirror grows foggy and damp. My face is hard to discern, misted over, as though from someone's heavy breathing on the glass. Soon I can no longer see it.

This morning I notice that my face is the same and yet different. Does one notice these differences or are they imagined?

Every morning your face looks the same, although it may have changed subtly. Then what of the face beneath that one, and the one beneath that?

An Invocation

Tonight a summer storm
 although the air is cool
 like autumn
With its gusts of chilly rain
 its wind and spray

I sit alone and cannot help
 but think your presence
 as it might be
 were you here

And does the voice
 that speaks now in my mind
 and renders any other sound
or any other voice
 except for yours
irrelevant...

What does it say of you?

For you are there
 somewhere inside of me
where thought meets thought
 moment comes to moment --
 in the sense of secrecy
the deeper harmony
 myself

It must be there
 your presence

in my mind
You --
the one vibration
the tonality I call by name
now surely I remember

it is mingled with my own

You are not far

Blade of Grass

We lie here thinking, waiting, not waiting,
And have what we would have, the world, this time --
My head is in your lap, the sun too high, too bright,
The hot sun flaring on your hat's white brim.
And then you shade my eyes like sleep, your face
Dips down to mine, your long brown hair drapes down.
There is no sun, the earth is only half
The thing beneath me, love a kind of hand
That draws you in a circle – perfect, whole --
Until we are our world. Yet it's so light --
Poised on a breath...a feather...delicate,
A strand of hair is all that ties it, slight
As the blade of grass that touches, taps my cheek.

Souvenir

The night's completely silent at this hour
And I've come back from being with you late.
There's nothing else to do but sleep or wait
For dawn to come. Outside a late night shower

Is tapping through the branches, on the eaves --
It sounds like sugar pouring through the leaves.
Aside from this a perfect stillness reigns
Just broken by the drops on the window panes.

What can I say? So many thoughts of you
Who are the one thing in my mind tonight --
Unquiet thoughts and the remembered sight

Of you in lamplight, both beautiful and true:
My memory, a trivial souvenir,
Except that it tells how beautiful you were.

The Summer Hat

We push aside the lilac at the front yard gate
And pass along the shaded pathway there;
Still cool and mild, the almost summer air
Full of the scent of summer in mid-May.
What did the motto of that picture you had say?
(A framed and rather arty photograph
With mist and wood path haunted by some trees.)
That magic doors are always recognized too late?
You're silent, smile, and almost seem to laugh.

We walk and talk. I can't help notice that
You've worn your favorite summer evening hat,
A panama with roses in the band,
Brought off so naturally, an offhand grace
And emblem of your loveliness and ease
That shadows and yet compliments your face.
And as we walk our conversation wanes,
But in a manner that we understand
To be a quieter and deeper speech,
Exchanging solitude instead of talk.

The summer evening slowly turns to dusk
Around us as we lengthen out our walk
And cut across the field by your house.
It's nearly dark, and yet it almost feels
That night delays a moment just for us.
You stop and turn, I see your silhouette
Against the dark, beneath, the grass is wet
With ground mist and a sweet damp fragrance fills
The air around us like a scent of musk,
Or possibly of clover, or of trodden mint.

What could I say? What sort of compliment
Could be the equal of your presence there?
Some kind of token that I might present,
Albeit insubstantial, just some word
Or words while any of the time remains
Before our visit's ended and we reach
Your doorstep. By now it's fully dark, the air
Has that late feel. We part, and afterward,
In memory, it seems we might have shared
Some finer and incomparable speech.

A Dream of Jasmine, the Flower of Innocence

We two lulled drowsing on the lawn at night
Drift in the night's warm breeze and jasmine scent,
The breeze that moves within
And touches softly each jasmine leaf itself
And brings us just one thought, the thought of one desire
Already beautifully possessed, and peace itself,
And love also possessed.

We lie here in repose,
And petals fall down softly in the midnight air.
And jasmine fills the night.
Our hands touch softly, though they seem not to.

The air is just all jasmine,
All our thoughts and even breathing like it too,
Whose vines and yellow flowers
Crowd upward through our dreams,
And crowd into the dream I dream of you
And crowd into the dream you dream of me too.

An Invitation

The after-scent of rain and the wind moving in the trees
Are like a kind of presence in the warm night air.
I called on you this evening, and you came away,
Thinking perhaps to find in me
The echo of your own solitude.

We pushed aside the lilac at the backyard fence
And passed through to the path across the field.
And now we're in your graveyard, as you call it,
Where you always come,
Your favorite of all spots,
And that's the reason that you've led me here.

The two of us pass quietly, stopping here and there.
Our steps are cushioned silent in the late spring grass,
And the long loose-fitting dress you wear blows free
As we pass beneath the oak and poplar trees.

We move without a thought from place to place,
No longer talking now, just listening.
And the trees' dark arms, as I think that poet called them,
Shade in their own completely covert spots
And make enclosures that are all of deep shadows,
So that we move from shadow into moonlight
Into shadow once again.

And in the middle of the cemetery -- what?
A stone facade amid the oak and poplar trees,
The marble pillars bathed in polar blue by moonlight,
The full moon shining, silvery and white,
The moonlight weird, fluorescent...

And the mausoleum simply standing there,
A kind of temple as we thought, and the trees the sacred
grove.

And you perhaps a nymph. And I? Ah, yes....

And finally one day when you and I
Are elsewhere and no longer taking walks
At night here anymore, we'll come back anyway.
I'll come back and I'll find you at this spot
Or you'll return and always find me here.
Each waiting for the other, it will be
As though we'd never left -- just you and just me.

AFTERWORD

Encounters With the Author in Taipei

We first made the author's acquaintance at a well-known restaurant in Taipei, the Wysteria Tea House, famous as having been a meeting place at one time for dissident intellectuals in the years of political struggle in Taiwan .

During the recent effort to publish his rather extensive work, we had various occasions to discuss aspects of his past and current writing.

Your poetry is quite varied in style and in form. Where do you locate yourself in the overall debate concerning poetic form?

I consider myself an eclectic. The main thing for me is to grasp, mentally, a certain object -- that is, an experience, a scene, an event -- to see it and feel it. Any language that seems to convey the reality of that is good, any language which remains merely language, merely words, is for me of no interest, in some cases it is actively negative, in the sense of being obstructive.

A cliché?

Yes or not even a cliché but in a way worse than that. Much

of our language obscures the nature of reality. Words in themselves are, in a sense, the enemy of writing. I tell students that all the time. Words most often merely convey the usual accepted social understanding. Writing is for the purpose of grasping reality itself, which is always something other than the social understanding.

Do you consider yourself a political writer?

All writing is political in the sense of attempting to correct these false social understandings. At times its purpose is to merely reveal with a new freshness, a perceptual freshness, as it were. But even this itself has a certain basic political significance, in the sense that awakened human beings will act and think differently than those who are at rest in the normal tranquilized non-perception that we usually are caught up in.

Does living outside the United States help or hinder your writing?

I think it helps, in general. It is in some ways a very undeveloped culture, yet in other ways it is overbearing. (The US, that is.) There is, for example, a great deal of rather stifling political correctness, as it's called, and to get away from that is itself a positive thing. For a while I had no idea how I would ever get all this material published, especially if you're not there trying to do all the "networking" that is needed, and which I was absolutely terrible at anyway -- worse than terrible, I really had no clue, I still don't, I suppose. And then it came about that

you could just do it all by yourself, by means of the internet.

How much material is it? It's quite a lot, it would seem.

Yes, I guess it's about 40 volumes or so. Over 2,000 pages, if you want to measure it like that. I don't know how much it would weigh.

There seem to be many styles represented. Was that something you consciously strove for?

Yes. I always wanted to be able to represent a wide variety of experiences. My first models for the artist were people such as Picasso, Goethe, Bach -- artists who could work in a very wide range of forms and even use widely different styles. Of course, I can't compare myself to people like that, but it was still a goal, to try many types of things.

What sorts of things are you working on currently?

Well as you know I am trying to get all this existing work published, going through it, touching it up here and there, proofreading, and so forth. After that, I think I might return to some translating work -- Holderlin especially, and some Chinese poets, but don't ask me which ones.

About the Author

Steven Frattali is an expatriate American writer living in Taipei. He is the author to date of over 40 volumes of poetry, totaling over 2,000 pages of work. He is also the author of several critical works, among them *Person, Place and World: A Late Modern Reading of Robert Frost* and *Hypodermic Light: The Poetry of Philip Lamantia and the Question of Surrealism*.

About the Banyan Press of Taipei

The Banyan Press of Taipei was founded in 2009 by Samuel Palmer and Steven Frattali. It plans to publish the work of expatriate Anglophone writers of the Pacific Rim who are working outside the norms of mainstream publishing. The Press does not at this time invite submissions, but it hopes to do so in the future.

